

SKETCHES OF JEWISH BRAVERY,  
LOYALTY AND PATRIOTISM

IN THE  
SOUTH AMERICAN COLONIES AND  
THE WEST INDIES.

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BY  
GEORGE ALEXANDER KOHUT,  
NEW YORK CITY.

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REPRINTED FROM  
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AS  
PATRIOT, SOLDIER AND CITIZEN."

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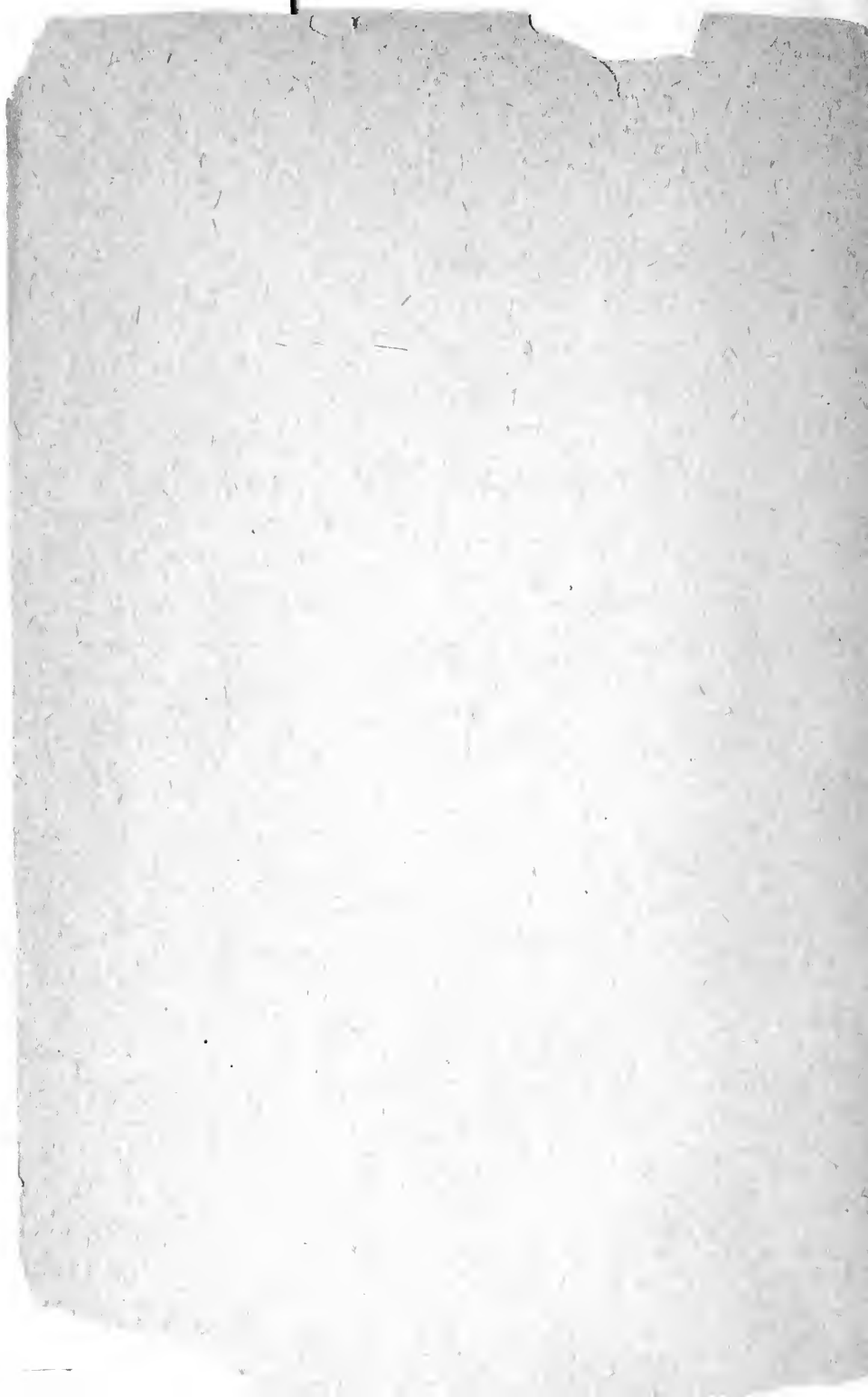
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PHILADELPHIA.

THE LEVYTYPE COMPANY.

1895.



**S**ketches of 



**Jewish Bravery,  
Loyalty and Patriotism**

In the  
**South American Colonies**  
And the  
**West Indies.**



By  
**George Alexander Kohut,**  
New York City.

Reprinted from  
"The American Jew as Patriot, Soldier and Citizen,"  
By Hon. Simon Wolf.  
Edited by Louis Edward Levy.

**Philadelphia,**  
**The Levytype Company,**  
**1895.**



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TO  
MARKS FISHEL, ESQ.

ONE, WHOSE NOBLE VIRTUES AND GENTLE,  
WINNING MANNERS, NO LESS THAN HIS  
TENDER, LOYAL FRIENDSHIP, ENDEAR HIM  
TO ALL WHO KNOW HIM, AND TO WHOM  
THE WRITER OF THESE PAGES OWES A  
LOVE AND GRATITUDE, WHICH CAN NEVER  
BE EXPRESSED, BUT MUST EVER BE  
"POETICALLY IDEALIZED," THIS MODEST  
PAMPHLET IS AFFECTIONATELY INSCRIBED,  
AS A MEAGRE, BUT SINCERE TOKEN OF AN  
ESTEEM THAT WILL NEVER LESSEN, AND  
A DEVOTION THAT WILL NEVER FAIL:

BY

G. A. K.

NEW YORK, AUGUST 1, 1895.



## SKETCHES OF JEWISH LOYALTY, BRAVERY AND PATRIOTISM IN THE SOUTH AMERICAN COLONIES AND THE WEST INDIES.

BY GEORGE ALEXANDER KOHUT, New York City.

### I

#### SERVICES RENDERED TO THE DUTCH BY THE JEWS OF BRAZIL (1623-44).

In 1624, when the Dutch conquered Brazil, several Jews, desirous of joining their co-believers in the newly acquired Dutch dominions, where our brethren flourished for many decades previously in the guise of New Christians or Marranos, enlisted in the Hollandish fleet as volunteers. Encouraged by this show of patriotism on the part of their newly arrived co-religionists, who, under the reign of the United Provinces, enjoyed all the blessings of peace and equality, many *Nuevos Christianos* openly renounced their sham faith and re-avowed Judaism, happy once more to breathe the air of freedom without suffering persecution. It is said that the Jewish soldiers in the navy displayed so much zeal and courage in the taking possession of Brazil that the government protected them ever after.<sup>1</sup> Even

<sup>1</sup> See H. J. Koenen's prize essay, *Geschiedenis der Joden in Nederland* (Utrecht, 1843), pp. 277-78: "Machtig breide zich deze bevolking uit als de Nederlanders omstreeks het jaar 1624 Brazilië veroverden. Op de Hollandsche vloot hadden verscheiden Joden vrijwillig dienst genomen, om zich in het te vermeesteren gewest met hunne geloofsgenooten te vereenigen. Deze ontmoeting, en de voor hen aanlichtende vrijheid onder Hollandsche Bestuur, maakten, dat vele Braziliaansche Nieuwe Christenen wederom opentlyk het Jodendom beleden; en dat zij eerlang eene tweede volkplanting hunner geloofsgenooten te Cayenne stichteden, waar David Nassi, een geboren Braziliaan, zich met goedkeuring der West-Indische Compagnie nederzette. Inmiddels hadden de Joden, die met 's lands vloot in 1624 naar Brazilië overgestoken waren en de Nederlanders dat land hadden helpen vermeesteren, aan hunne te Amsterdam woonachtige broederen geschreven, en hen uitgenoodigd om zich in het nieuw veroverde gewest op den pas ontgonnen koophandel te komen toelleggen; waartoe eene ruime

before putting to sea, remarks a French historian of Brazil,<sup>2</sup> the Dutch admirals obtained much useful information concerning the political situation of Brazil, from the Israelites there settled, and who were all eager to remain, or rather, to pass over to the Dutch, whose liberal spirit and religious tolerance seemed much more inviting to them than the cruel sceptre of Spain or Portugal. This is furthermore corroborated by another (English) writer, Mr. Robert G. Watson, in his excellent work: *Spanish and Portuguese South America during the Colonial Period* (London, 1884), Vol. II, p. 1, where we read: "The religious intolerance from which the Dutch had themselves so terribly suffered at the hands of their Spanish rulers had taught them to be tolerant in such matters towards others, and to this circumstance they were now (1623-24) indebted for much valuable information respecting Brazil, which they received from the Jews who had taken refuge amongst them."

It is apparent from these and other items to be mentioned later that the Jews rendered not only military and naval service to the Dutch in their struggle against Portugal in Brazil, but

gelegendheid was, sedert de Hollanders, na het sluiten van eenen wapenstilstand met de Portugezen, eene publicatie hadden afgekondigd, dat het den Joden voortan volkomen zoude vrijstaan, zich in Brazilië te vestigen, etc."

We have copied this in full, as Koenen, whom recent historians all follow, is the only authentic source, although in this case no authorities are given. This point, and others in connection with the early Jewish settlements in Brazil were discussed by the present writer in two papers: *Early Jewish Literature in America*, in *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society* (=P. A. J. H. S.), No. 3 (1895), pp. 103-47 (cf. esp. pp. 104, 105, 134-40) and *Jewish Martyrs of the Inquisition in South America*, to appear simultaneously with this volume, in the same place, No. 4.

<sup>2</sup> See Pieter Marinus Netscher's *Les Hollandais au Brésil, Notice Historique sur les Pays-Bas et le Brésil au XVII<sup>e</sup> siècle* (La Haye, 1853), p. 14: "Avant de mettre en mer (1623?), les amiraux Hollandais obtinrent sur la situation politique du Brésil les informations les plus utiles par l'intermédiaire des Juifs qui s'y étaient établis, et qui presque tous, désiraient avec ardeur passer sous le gouvernement des Provinces-Unies, à cause de sa tolérance en matière de religion." Cf. also De Beauchamp's *Histoire du Brésil*, vol. II, p. 159; Southey's *History of Brazil* (2nd ed.) I, pp. 477, 479, 495, suppl. note 135; vol. II, p. 241; Judge Daly's *Settlement of the Jews in North America* (2nd ed. New York, 1893) p. XVII.



diplomatic counsel of no little weight, by means of which Holland could conquer the American possessions and establish herself most firmly there. The inhabitants of Brazil at about that time (1623-38) were not very yielding. In fact R. Southey, the reliable and painstaking historian, says<sup>3</sup> that "The Portuguese were held in subjection only by fear, but many Portuguese Jews from Holland had taken their abode in a country where they could speak their own language as well as enjoy their own religion. *These were excellent subjects*; they exercised the charitable industry of their original nation secure of enjoying its fruits under a free government." The Dutch, upon taking possession of Brazil, issued a proclamation, no doubt with a view of attracting the Jews, whose accession would prove beneficial to the interests of the government, whereby they offered full possession of their property, and freedom of worship to all such as would submit. Amongst those who were thus brought under Dutch rule were *two hundred Jews*. (cf. Watson, *l. c.*, II, p. 2.) This liberal charter of religious freedom lasted as long as the Dutch supremacy until the Portuguese re-conquest of Brazil in 1654, with more or less privileges, according to the whim of the public whose dictates even the government had to obey, as we may see from what took place in 1638, as recorded by Southey (*l. c.*, Vol. I, p. 566): "Some of the Portuguese-Brazilians also, gladly throwing off the mask which they had so long been compelled to wear, joined their brethren in the synagogue. The open joy with which they now celebrated their ceremonies attracted too much notice; it excited horror in Catholics, and *even the Dutch themselves*, less liberal than their laws, pretended that the toleration of Holland did not extend to Brazil; the senate conceded to, and perhaps partook of the popular feeling, and hence arose the edict, by which the Jews were ordered to perform their rites more in private."<sup>4</sup>

Under Count Maurice's gentle reign our coreligionists lived in peace and they appear to have benefited by this temporary respite and acquired much wealth, for we find on record a

<sup>3</sup> *History of Brazil* (London, 1810), Vol. I, p. 566; cf. also the quotation in R. G. Watson's *Spanish and Portuguese South America*, etc., *op. cit.*, Vol. II, p. 29.

<sup>4</sup> See also Netscher's *Les Hollandais au Brésil*, etc., (La Haye, 1853), p. 94: "Les synagogues furent fermées, et les Juifs durent se

petition from the Jews of Mauritsstad, dated May 1, 1642, offering an annual present of 3000 florins to Count Maurice if he would be induced to remain as their Governor in Brazil.<sup>5</sup> In 1642, at the urgent invitation of their coreligionists (cf. Koenen, *l. c.*, p. 278), 600 Jews, headed by Moses Raphael de Aguilar and Ishac Aboab de Fonseca, came from Amsterdam<sup>6</sup> and formed a prosperous colony in Recife, which gave promise of glorious development, had not the wars between Holland and Portugal, in which our brethren took noble part, destroyed their hopes. In 1642, it must be noted, they again were permitted to worship publicly, a privilege which did not remain unrewarded, for we soon hear of certain state services rendered by the Jews in 1644 and later, when many mean conspiracies against the government were afoot, concocted, no doubt by the Portuguese under Dutch rule. Watson (*Spanish and Portuguese South America*, etc., London, 1884, Vol. II, p. 47) says: "At length, however, the time came when his (the chief conspirator's, Fernandes) practices could no longer be ignored by the government, *who were set on their guard chiefly by the Jews*. These are certainly not to be blamed for wishing a continuance of the *status quo*; since, in the event of an outbreak, they were certain to be plundered by both parties with complete impartiality; whilst, in the event of a victory on the part of the Portuguese, they had before them the image of the fiendish agents of the Inquisition," which, as we have elsewhere shown,<sup>7</sup>

borner à célébrer leur culte dans l'intérieur des maisons. Le mal fut d'autant plus sensible qu'un grand nombre de commerçants respectables et d'autres habitants du Brésil-Hollandais étaient des Juifs, qui depuis nombre d'années s'étaient réfugiés au Recife on qui récemment y avaient été attirés par la tolérance du comte Maurice." Cf. also *ibid.*, pp. 128, 202, note 82; and Judge Daly's work, *op. cit.*, p. 6. On the subject of religious freedom enjoyed by Jews in Brazil, more at another time.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Netscher's work, *op. cit.*, p. 127. The document is preserved in *Le rapport détaillé de Tolner, contresigné par le Comte, avec tous les appendices, se trouve aux Arch. du Roy., Liasse Ind. Occ.*, 1641-1644. The contents of this letter will be communicated elsewhere.

<sup>6</sup> See Dr. M. Kayserling's article in *P. A. J. H. S.*, No. 3, (1895), p. 14 sq. Geo. A. Kohut, *ibid.*, pp. 103, 105, 137 sq.

<sup>7</sup> Proofs for these statements may be found in my study on *The Jewish Martyrs of the Inquisition in South America*, *P. A. J. H. S.*, No. 4, (1895.)

they had good reason to fear. We read later (*l. c.*, p. 48) that Fernandes could not be captured and summoned troops. Many obeyed the call and fell upon such Dutchmen and Jews as happened to be within their reach.

The loyalty of the Jews in the matter of revealing the various state conspiracies is thus alluded to by Pieter Marinus Netscher in his admirable work *Les Hollandais au Brésil*, (La Haye 1853), p. 145: "Fortunately, national and religious fanaticism did not smother the sentiments of humanity and justice in the hearts of all the conspirators. Two Portuguese [Jews?] Sebastian Carvalho and Fernando Vale, with *five Jews*, fearing that their lives and fortunes were at stake, resolved to disclose the secret of the plot to the Grand Council.<sup>8</sup> Another conspiracy was brought to light and denounced to the government by a Jew named *Moise Accoignes*, who, against his will, was forced to become an accessory to the plot.<sup>9</sup> He is no doubt alluded to by Prof. H. Graetz, who, in his *History of the Jews* (English version, Philadelphia, 1895, Vol. IV, p. 693. Jewish Publication Society of America) writes: "Of course, the Brazilian Jews enjoyed perfect equality of rights with other citizens, *for they rendered the Dutch essential services as advisers and warriors*. When the native Portuguese, who bore the yoke of the Dutch impatiently, formed a conspiracy to get rid of the Dutch authorities at a banquet in the capital, and attack the colony bereft of government [?], *a Jew gave warning, and*

<sup>8</sup> We give the text in full: "Heureusement le fanatisme national et religieux n'avait pas étouffé les sentiments d'humanité et de loyauté dans les coeurs de tous les conjurés. Deux Portugais, Sébastian Carvalho et Fernando Vale, *avec cinq Juifs*, craignant d'ailleurs aussi pour leurs jours et leur fortune, se décidèrent en commun à révéler le secret de la conspiration au grand conseil."

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Montanus Arnoldus, *De nieuwe en onbekende wereld of beschrijving van Amerika en't Zuidland*, Amsterdam, 1671, fol. 81; Netscher, *l. c.*, p. 144, says: "*Un Juif, Moise Accoignes*, qu'on avait forcé à prendre part à cette conspiration le dénonça au grand conseil." N. G. van Kampen, in his *Geschiede der Nederlande*, vol. II, p. 118 and Frankel in *Monatsschrift*, vol. XII (1863) p. 323-324, record, that the ringleader in this conspiracy was Joan Fernandes Vinira (?), who intended to poison the government officials at a dinner given at his own home, and the plot would have succeeded had not a Jew raised the alarm.

*saved the colony from certain destruction.*" Southey, whom at the present writing we are unable to consult, (cf. his *History of Brazil*, Vol. II, pp. 60-70), and Koenen, also chronicle the timely intervention of a faithful Israelite,<sup>10</sup> who, at the risk of his life, for the conspirators would not have scrupled to put him out of the way, informed the authorities of the impending calamity to the state.

We also know that a Jew in Lisbon proved instrumental in intercepting some official papers in reference to the revolt in Brazil.<sup>11</sup>

The execution of one, Jacob Rabbi, an agent of Holland, who must have been a Jew, is mentioned by Netscher in the following terms: ". . . . The cause of this desertion [from the Portuguese troops?] was that the Lieutenant-Colonel, Garstman, had been sufficiently impolitic to put to death (in 1645 or 1646?) for a real or supposed crime, a certain Jacob Rabbi, German by birth, of a ferocious character. He had lived for many years among the savages as agent of the Hollandish government."<sup>12</sup>

It is evident that the Dutch Government and especially the Governor, Count Maurice de Nassau, was not backward in appreciating the services of the Jews. An ordinance from the States-General reads:

" . . . The persons, goods and rights of the Jews in Brazil are taken under the special protection of the Govern-

<sup>10</sup> Cf. *Geschiedenis der Joden*, p. 279: De terugroeping van Johan Maurits, wiens edele afkomst en schitterende eigenschappen zelfs den Portugezen eerbied inboezemden, en wiens ongelookige opvolgers, meestal kooplieden (merchants), leden de Westindische Maatschappij, door hunne bekrompenheid, hebzucht en onmenschelijkheid algemeenen afkeer verwekten, deed onder de Portugesche ingezetenen een sluw beraamde zamenzwering tegen de Hollanders ontstaan, die op het punt was van te gelukken, toen een Joodsche geneesheer haar door het schrijven van een naamloozen brief aan den dag bracht," etc.

<sup>11</sup> Netscher, *l. c.* p. 153. : " . . . . Mais on parvint enfin en Hollande, à se procurer, par un Juif qui demeurait à Lisbonne, le moyen d'intercepter quelques lettres du roi, qui prouvèrent au soulèvement dans le Brésil." (Ces lettres se trouvent aux Arch. du Roy., Liasse Ind. Occ. 1647 et 1648.)

<sup>12</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, *l. c.*, p. 154; See also *Lettre de Justif. de Garstman aux Etats-généraux en date du 27 Septembre, 1646.* Arch. du Roy., Liasse Ind. Occ. 1645 et 1646.

ment, because of the fidelity and courage which that nation had on every occasion displayed toward the said Government.'<sup>13</sup>

## II.

### BRAVE DEFENSE OF THE JEWS IN BRAZIL IN 1645-1646.

The best evidence of Jewish loyalty to their lenient Dutch rulers was given at a time when the Hollandish Government was contending with the Portuguese for the possession of Brazil. The numerous conspiracies years previous were only a foretaste of what followed and when at last, in the year 1645, war actually broke out, our co-religionists lost no time in siding with their generous patrons, regardless of consequences. Among those that distinguished themselves for their noble patriotism and whose co-operation in behalf of the needy and distressed won all hearts, was a wealthy Israelite, Abraham Coen by name, whose fame is recognized in the following verses written in his honor by one of the greatest Portuguese Jewish poets of Holland, Don Miguel Levi de Barrios, who visited Cayenne<sup>14</sup> in 1660 and remained there until 1662 :

*Abraham Coen en el Brasil remoto  
del principe Mauricio halló el agrado  
prospero y noble, y oy del Rey Empireo  
goço la luz en ideal palacio.*

*Cerco al Brasil el tuso batioso  
en nueve años continuos, que empezaron  
en el de mil seiscientos y quarenta  
y cinco, contra el valeroso Holandio.*

*Y en todos con magnanima grandeza  
el grande Abraham Coen sustento à quantos  
Judios y Cristianos de su auxilio  
en la miseria atroz necesitaron.*

*Entonces los Señoras del Supremo  
Consejo sobre el Pueblo Brasileiro  
vieron del fiel Coen la piedad grande.<sup>15</sup>*

<sup>13</sup> Cf. Dr. A. Hahn, in *American Jews' Annual* for 1886-1887, p. 35; see also Isaac de Costa, *Israel und die Voelker* (Frankfort o. M., 1855), p. 319; and Dr. Z. Frankel, in his *Monatsschrift*, vol. XII, (1863), p. 323.

<sup>14</sup> Cf. Kayserling's *Sephardim, Romanische Poesien der Juden in Spanien* (Leipzig 1859) p. 266; *P. A. J. H. S.*, No. 3, p. 18.

<sup>15</sup> *P. A. J. H. S.*, l. c., p. 15, note. Jacob Coen, Abraham's eldest son, was afterwards appointed "Contador Mayor," Receiver-General of Duke Moritz of Nassau. Cf. *ib. l. c.*

Dr. Hahn informs us that "in the perilous times of 1645 and 1648 great services were rendered to the government by the Portuguese family of Cohen in furnishing ammunition and provisions."<sup>16</sup>

The Portuguese besieged Recife, near Pernambuco, which boasted of a large Jewish population (among them several fine scholars: David Senior Coronel, Dr. Abraham de Mercado, Jahacob Mucate, Ishac Castanho and others)<sup>17</sup> and the inhabitants thus deprived of every possible communication, endured much suffering. The Jews, encouraged by their learned and eloquent Rabbi Isaac Aboab, the friend of Menasse ben Israel, bore their tribulations bravely, and though almost famished for want of nourishment, defended the fort with such remarkable skill and heroism, as to evoke the praise and gratitude of the Government. Had it not been for the dauntless resistance offered by them, the garrison would have been compelled to surrender.

Aboab commemorated his thrilling experiences of war in the introductory chapter of his Hebrew version of Abraham Cohen Herrera's *Porta Coeli* (Sha'ar Ha'shamayim) which he began to translate in June, 1655 (22nd of Siwan 5415). Besides this, he wrote nine years before (anno 1646) a poetical account of the siege in a work entitled *Secher Rab*,<sup>18</sup> *Prayers and Confessions and Supplications, which were composed for appealing to God in his trouble and in the distress of the Congregation, when the troops of Portugal overwhelmed them during their sojourn in Brazil in the year 5406 [1646]. And I have caused the wonderful works of God to be remembered in songs and praises, when he released them from the hands of their enemies.* It is written in Hebrew. The Ms. is still extant in Amsterdam, in possession of the "Arbol de las Vidas" Theo-

<sup>16</sup> Cf. *American Jews' Annual* for 1886-1887, p. 35; Isaac de Costa, *l. c.*, p. 318; see also Hon. Oscar S. Straus's address in *P. A. J. H. S.*, No. 3, p. 3.

<sup>17</sup> See Kayserling in *P. A. J. H. S.*, *l. c.*, p. 14; Graetz, *History of the Jews* (Engl. transl.) vol. IV, p. 693.

<sup>18</sup> See full particulars concerning this work in our study on *Early Jewish Literature in America*, *P. A. J. H. S.*, No. 3, pp. 105, 106 139, No. 9, and Dr. Kayserling's paper, *ibid. l. c.*, p. 16.

logical Society.<sup>19</sup> The part played by the Jews in the defense of the colony is described by eminent Jewish and Christian historians.<sup>20</sup> Dr. Kayserling's and Prof. Graetz's accounts are worth citing *in extenso*. The former, who is engaged in copying this earliest specimens of American Jewish literature, the work of Isaac Aboab, for the American Jewish Historical Society, writes as follows: "Aboab became *Chacham* (Chief) of the congregation in Recife, which would have become one of the largest and richest, had it not been hindered in its development by the disturbances of war; it was dissolved after a short existence. The new settlers enjoyed tranquility only for a few years, for already in 1645 the sanguinary struggles, for the possession of the colony, between the Portuguese and the Hollanders began. The Jews stood faithfully on the side of the Hollanders, who had granted them perfect equality, and distinguished themselves by courage and heroism, as well as by succor to the distressed. During the war Abraham Coen, a rich and high-minded man of Amsterdam, who was in great favor with Duke Moritz of Nassau, supported Jews and Christians in such a magnanimous way that the Supreme Council of the Brazilian people looked with admiration at the great work of mercy. Isaac Aboab faithfully discharged the duties of his office; he ordered days of fasting and prayer, and his fiery speeches encouraged his co-religionists to perseverance and devotion. It was a fierce struggle of nine years which brought much suffering on the Jews. Recife was besieged and the garrison decimated by hunger. 'Many of the Jewish immigrants were killed by the enemy, many died of hunger. The remainder were exposed to death from similar causes. Those who had been accustomed to delicacies were glad to be able to satisfy their hunger with dry bread; soon they could not obtain even this; they were in want of everything, and were preserved alive as by a miracle.' "

<sup>19</sup> Cf. *l. c.*, p. 16, No. 3.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Van Kampen, *Geschichte der Niederlande*, vol. II, p. 120; *apud* Frankel, *Monatsschrift*, vol. XII (1863), p. 324; Koenen's *Geschiedenis der Joden in Nederland* (Utrecht, 1843) p. 280 sq.; Isaac da Costa, *Israel und die Voelker* (Germ. ed. by K. Mann, Frankfort, A. M., 1855) p. 318 ff.; Graetz's *History*, *l. c.*, p. 693-4; Kayserling, *ib.*, *l. c.*, pp. 17-18.

Prof. Graetz, still more explicit, writes to the following effect: "In 1646, when open war broke out between the Portuguese and the Dutch, and the garrison of Recife, exhausted by famine, was on the point of surrendering unconditionally, the Jews encouraged the governor to brave resistance. A fanatical war of race and religion between the Portuguese and the Dutch devastated fair Brazil, and a famine ensued. The Jews vied with the Dutch in suffering and bravery. Isaac Aboab, the Chacham of the Brazil community, paints the suffering of the war, which he himself endured, in lurid colors: 'Volumes would not suffice to relate our miseries. The enemy spread over field and wood, seeking here for booty and there for life. Many of us died, sword in hand, others from want; they now rest in cold earth. We survivors were exposed to death in every form; those accustomed to luxuries were glad to seize mouldy bread to stay their hunger.'

"At last, the States-General were compelled by European wars to surrender the colony to the Portuguese. The devoted zeal of the Jews for the political welfare of the Dutch was a firm band, never afterwards dissolved, between them and the Republic. The toleration and equal position of Jews in the Netherlands were ensured forever."

Southey relates (*History of Brazil*, Vol. II, p. 241; *apud* Koenen's *Geschiedenis*, p. 281), that when the Dutch in Recife were besieged the second time,<sup>21</sup> the Jews manifested much courage and bravery in its defense. One of the Pintos (Jewish stock also in Surinam, where Isaac Pinto, a member of this family, likewise displayed zeal and heroism in resisting the enemy), is said to have manned the fort *Dos Affrogados* single handed, until, overwhelmed by superior force, he was compelled to surrender.

"In the wars of the Dutch against the Spaniards," says Dr. A. Hahn, "one of the Pintos was killed at his post while bravely defending one of the fortresses." His death is nowhere else recorded, however.<sup>22</sup>

<sup>21</sup> Cf. Southey's *History of Brazil*, Vol. II, pp. 202-230; Van Kampen, *Geschichte der Niederlande*, Vol. II, pp. 120-122; also the same writer's *Geschiedenis der Nederlanders buiten Europa*; Isaac de Costa, *op. cit.*, p. 319.

<sup>22</sup> See the *American Jews' Annual* for 1886-1887, p. 35.



The supremacy of the United Provinces now came to an end in America. On the 23d of January, 1654, Recife, together with the neighboring cities of Mauritsstad, Parayba, Itamarica, Seara, and other Hollandish possessions, was ceded to the Portuguese conquerors, with the condition that a general amnesty be granted. (Koenen, *l. c.*, p. 282). Although, as Netscher<sup>23</sup> remarks, this stipulation was agreed upon, and the Jews, who were loyal supporters of Holland, were promised every consideration, the Portuguese governor, heeding the treacherous advice of jealous persons, ordered the Jews to quit Brazil at once. It must be admitted, in justice to Portugal, that he treated them kindly, inasmuch as he placed at their disposal sixteen vessels to carry them and their property anywhere they chose, and furnished them with passports and safeguards. Thus after a residence of several decades, Aboab, Aguilar, the Nassys, Pereiras, the Mezas, Abraham de Castro, Josua Sarfati, both surnamed *el Brasil*,<sup>24</sup> returned to Amsterdam, and many others went to New York, where they formed the nucleus of a prosperous colony. They arrived in safety, although one of their vessels, attacked by pirates, was rescued by the French and escorted to New Holland.<sup>25</sup>

<sup>23</sup> *Les Hollandais au Brésil*, p. 163, *ad ann.* 1653-1654: "Une amnistie pleine et entière était accordée aux Portugais et aux Juifs, qui avaient pris cause pour le gouvernement Hollandais, et les Juifs et autres personnes non-catholiques qui resteraient au Brésil y seraient traités de la même manière, qu'au Portugal (ce qui cachait une arrière-pensée digne de l'intolérance religieuse de ces jours-là." Here he adds a note which is hardly correct: "Aujourd'hui il ne se trouvent presque pas des Juifs au Brésil."

<sup>24</sup> Cf. Koenen, *l. c.*, p. 282; Kayserling, *P. A. J. H. S.*, No. 3, p. 17.

<sup>25</sup> See the *Measseph* for 1784; *ap.* Jost, *Geschichte der Israeliten*, Vol. VIII, pp. 241-242; Da Costa, *Israel und Die Voelker*, *l. c.*, pp. 321-322; Dr. Hahn in *The American Jews' Annual* (1886-1887) p. 36; Rev. E. M. Myers' *The Centurial* (New York, 1890), p. 105; *P. A. J. H. S.*, No. 2, p. 99. More fully in our paper on *Early Jewish Literature in America*, *l. c.*, p. 138-139.

## III.

## SAMUEL NASSY OF SURINAM.

Not all the Jews, who were by royal order expelled from Brazil in 1654, when the Dutch possessions in South America were ceded to Portugal, left their adopted country, where they, for a brief span of years enjoyed all the privileges of their fellowmen. Many were so much attached to American soil that they dared remain, despite the edict of banishment, in Brazil and elsewhere.

In Dutch Guiana, a thrifty colony was formed as early as 1644,<sup>26</sup> two years after the influx and settlement of Amsterdam Jews in Brazil under Aboab and Aguilar. These were undoubtedly the original colonists of Brazil. This colony soon increased by a second settlement of Jews hailing, likewise, from Brazil, who were undoubtedly persuaded to migrate thither by their Dutch coreligionists in Cayenne. The President of the West Indian Company, recognizing their influence as a commercial and political body, granted a most liberal charter of rights<sup>27</sup> in 1659 (September 12th), wherein freedom of thought, and liberty of conscience and worship were duly accorded to them through their able representative, David Nassy, a native Brazilian, who, by force of his personality, culture and intelligence, was destined to play a most important part in the political and social development of this and other colonies subsequently formed in the Guianas. So enticing was this generous programme, that already in the following year, 1660, 152 Jews

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Koenen's *Geschiedenis der Joden in Nederland*, p. 283; Dr. M. Kayserling, *Sephardim, Romanische Poesien der Juden in Spanien*, (Leipzig, 1859), p. 265.

<sup>27</sup> The Dutch text of this valuable document is published in the *Essai Historique sur la Colonie Surinam*, Paramaribo 1788 [Amsterdam 1791], Vol. II, pp. 113-122 and in Koenen's work on the *History of the Jews in Holland*, l. c., pp. 460-466. The present writer intends to reprint the original text with an English translation in the *P. A. J. H. S.*; cf. his paper on *Early Jewish Literature in America* in the *Publications* No. 3 (1895), p. 104, 136, 137.

of both sexes,<sup>28</sup> embarked at Livorno, Italy,<sup>29</sup> bound for the land of freedom, where they arrived in the ship *Monte del Cisne*, having set sail on the memorable 9th day of Ab (August) 1660, in order to build up their temple under more favorable auspices in another hemisphere.<sup>30</sup>

Among their number was the famous Spanish poet and historian De Barrios (see above), to whom we owe many important items of early American Jewish history. His visit to America was not a happy one, for shortly after his arrival his wife, Deborah, died in Tabago (West Indies).<sup>31</sup>

The continuous wars between Holland and Portugal caused the colonists no little grief and annoyance. The frequent devastations of the French, too, who were equally zealous and greedy for conquest, gave them so much anxiety that they decided to transplant the colony to Surinam—a plan which was carried out on May 15th, 1664.<sup>32</sup>

As the writer is engaged in compiling an extensive work on

<sup>28</sup> Cf. Kayserling *Sephardim*, etc., l. c., p. 266; his paper on the *Earliest Rabbis and Jewish Writers in America*, in *P. A. J. H. S.*, No. 3, p. 18; Koenen, l. c., pp. 283–284.

<sup>29</sup> From this it would appear that the Jews in South America were corresponding and perhaps commercially connected with their brethren in Italy. We have elsewhere proven that the Marranos in Hispaniola were carrying on an extensive trade between various large sea-ports of Italy (see our forthcoming paper on *The Jewish Martyrs of the Inquisition in South America*, to appear in *P. A. J. H. S.*, No. 4, 1895), and that the Jews of Brazil as early as 1636 wrote to Rabbi Chayim Sabbathai, of Salonica, in reference to disputes arising in their midst concerning Jewish customs and ritual. Cf. the notes in our study quoted above, *P. A. J. H. S.*, No. 3, pp. 104–105, 137.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Barrios' reference at the end of his *Opuscula*: "En Tisa beab (sic) sali de Liorne año de 1660 con 152 Almas de Israel en la nave llamada Monte del Cisne para ir apoblar a Cayana conquista de Holandeses en America." Koenen, l. c., p. 283, numbers only 112 passengers, which is evidently erroneous. Cf. also Kayserling, *Sephardim*, etc., p. 266, note 1; 355, n. 402; *P. A. J. H. S.*, No. 3, p. 18.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Kayserling *Sephardim*, l. c., and *P. A. J. H. S.*, 3, p. 18; see more fully in my paper on a *Contribution to the History of the Jews in the Islands of St. Thomas, Jamaica and Barbadoes*, to appear in *P. A. J. H. S.*, No. 4.

<sup>32</sup> See Koenen's *Geschiedenis*, p. 284. The date 1654, there given is probably a misprint for 1664.

the Jews of Surinam he refrains now from entering into details concerning their early career. Suffice it to say that the spirit of their Dutch masters followed them thenceforth for more than a century and a half. The English government then ruling the colony, true to their traditional standard of tolerance ever since the days of Cromwell and Menasseh ben Israel, endowed them with equal civil rights and granted them not only full exercise of their religion, but excused them from public and military service on the Sabbath day. The document is a precious chapter in the history of religious liberty in America. It was published recently by the present writer.<sup>33</sup> Without further prolegomena, we desire to introduce one of the members of the famous family of Nassy, all of whom fully deserved the distinction of nobility implied in their name,<sup>34</sup> for their bravery and statesmanship.

History records the estimable services of Samuel Nassy, who but for some unlucky circumstance would have occupied the highest official position in Surinam. De Barrios, who probably knew him personally, remembers him in the following words: "*Del pueblo de Sarinam Samuel Nasi (sic) Señorea El corazón con los dones y et estudio con la ciencia.*"<sup>35</sup> Dr. Kayserling, in a recent article says: "Of great influence upon the free development of the colony, as on the condition of the Jewish inhabitants, was the activity of Samuel Nasi, a talented and scientifically trained man, who is designated as 'Citizens' Captain,' and was a candidate for the position of governor."<sup>36</sup> It is said that

<sup>33</sup> Cf. Appendix II to my paper on *Early Jewish Literature in America*, *P. A. J. H. S.*, No. 3, pp. 145-147, cf. also pp. 125-132 where some points in their history are given.

<sup>34</sup> Dr. E. Carmoly, in his essay on *Don Joseph Nasi, Duc de Naxos* (Brussels, 1855), traces the relationship of this eminent personage even to American shores, where the Nasis flourished. The word Nasi in Hebrew indicates chief, or prince. See also Fuerst's *Orient*, XII (1851-2), p. 335; Steinschneider's *Hammaskir*, II (1859), p. 33.

<sup>35</sup> See Don Miguel Levi de Barrios, *Arbol de las Vidas*, p. 90; apud Kayserling, in *P. A. J. H. S.*, No. 3, p. 18, note 2.

<sup>36</sup> Cf. Kayserling, *ib.*, l. c.; and his article: *Die Juden in Surinam*, published in Frankel's *Monatsschrift für die Geschichte und Wissenschaft des Judenthums*, Vol. VIII, (1859), p. 297; also Van Sijpenstein, *Beschrijving van Suriname, historisch-geographischen statistisch overzigt. Uit officiële Bronnen bijeengebragt* (Gravenhage, 1854,) p. 22.

Governor Aerssens, with whom the Jews of Surinam had some little difficulty,<sup>37</sup> sealed a treaty of peace with the Indians, who molested the early settlers quite often, and in order to make it of a more durable character, he formed an alliance with the chieftain's daughter.<sup>38</sup> While he lived there was no disturbance at all, but almost immediately after his death, the savage tribes returned to their former aggressive attitude and made a furious onslaught on the colony. With the help of the Jewish inhabitants, who were headed by Captain Samuel Nassy, the Indians were promptly repulsed.<sup>39</sup>

Nassy soon acquired influence and prominence among his co-religionists in particular. He strove to introduce a few necessary reforms in ritual and ceremony—the first traces of the reform movement in America—especially in the abrogation of certain festivals which were perhaps too burdensome to the community. It seems, however, that in this he met with considerable opposition, although he had the sanction and support of the Rabbis in Amsterdam, with whom he corresponded.<sup>40</sup> The authority with which he was vested by reason of his executive ability and earnest zeal soon diminished with the arrival of the newly appointed governor, Heer Van Scherpenhuizen, the successor of Aerssens,<sup>41</sup> a fact which tended much to embitter his days and aroused sharp controversy between him and his rival. He had the satisfaction of being instrumental in his recall soon after his accession.<sup>42</sup>

<sup>37</sup> See Koenen's *Geschiedenis der Joden*, etc., pp. 291–92.

<sup>38</sup> Cf. *ibid.*, l. c., p. 293; *Essai Historique sur la Colonie Surinam*, etc., Vol. I, p. 42.

<sup>39</sup> Koenen, l. c.: "Zij werden vooral door de Joden, aan wier hoofd zich als Kapitein Samuel Nassy bevond, teruggedreven."

<sup>40</sup> Koenen, l. c., says: "Deze Nassy verkreeg van tijd tot tijd veel invloed onder zijne geloofsgenooten, en trachtte eenige hervormingen bij hen tot stand te brengen, in zonderheid met opzicht tot hunne zoo menigvaldige feestdagen; doch hij vond daarin niet weinig tegenwerking, ofschoon hij door brieven der Amsterdamsche Rabbijnen werd ondersteund."

<sup>41</sup> Koenen, l. c.: "Zijn gezag verminderde zeer, toen de Kolonie op nieuw een Bewindhebber verkreeg in den Heer Van Scherpenhuizen, die Aerssens in het bestuur opvolgde."

<sup>42</sup> See Kayserling, in *Monatsschrift*, l. c., Vol., VIII, p. 207: "*Samuel (Cohen) Nasi* wird als Bürger-Capitän bezeichnet und trieb

Nassy flattered himself that his personal influence was necessary to the welfare and prosperity of the colony. And he was right. The Jews relied so implicitly upon his counsels and were so certain that he would be proclaimed governor, for he enjoyed the esteem of Jew and Gentile alike, that it was an unpleasant shock to them all when quite another person, comparatively unknown, was chosen in his stead. It is, therefore, not surprising that Samuel Nassy, seeing the loss of his public prestige, thought fit to betake himself to Amsterdam, unwilling to remain in a country which owed all its present affluence to his sterling honesty and wise management, and was yet so slow in showing its gratitude to the able statesman. His disappointment and dissatisfaction in not succeeding Heer Van Sommelsdyk as governor infected the whole Jewish community. The rupture which eventually followed between the Jews and Governor Scherpenhuizen resulted in the latter's removal.<sup>43</sup> This was chiefly occasioned by the unfriendly treatment of the Jews at the governor's hands, who, seeing in them only the partisans of his former rival, took care to harrass them with unjust taxation. This exasperated them so much that they lodged a complaint against him with Baron de Belmonte and their "Citizens' Captain" Samuel Nassy, both in Amsterdam, and demanded the immediate recall of their prejudiced governor from the State-Council. Strangely enough, Nassy's influence

nicht allein die stets wieder neu einbrechenden Indianer mit starkem Arm zurück, sondern bewirkte auch, dass der neu ernannte Gouverneur Jan (Johann) van Scharphuizen von seinem Posten abberufen wurde." Cf. also Isaac de Costa's work, *op. cit.*, p. 321.

<sup>43</sup> See Koenen's *Geschiedenis*, etc., p. 294: "Ongelukkig ontstond er een scherpe naijver tusschen den nieuwen Gouverneur en Samuel Nassy, die vóór zijne komst bijkans alle gezag in zich vereenigd had, en wellicht had gehoopt den Heer Van Sommelsdyk in het bestuur te zullen opvolgen; ten gevolge waarvan hij goedgevond de nieuw wereld te verlaten, en zich onder zijne broederen te Amsterdam te gaan nederzetten. Ook na zijn vertrek bleef de spanning tusschen de hoofden der Israelitische bevolking en den Heer Van Scherpenhuizen voortduren, zoodat de eersten zich bij den Baron de Belmonte en Samuel Nassy te Amsterdam over hem beklagden, hun bijstand verzochten, en de terugroeping van den Bewindhebber op die wijs wisten te bewerken. Hij werd in 1696 vervangen door Paulus Van Der Veen, en deze op zijne beurt in 1706 door Willem de Gooyer."

was still powerful, for he was replaced, in 1696, by another governor, Paulus van der Veen by name, shortly after the petition was filed. Scherpenhuizen embarked for Holland. Having been taken prisoner by the French on his way thither, he arrived there only after several months. Hardly had he landed at Amsterdam, before he was arraigned by Samuel Nassy before the civil court and he was compelled to vindicate his conduct.<sup>44</sup> The record of that trial and defense, in which Nassy took a leading part, is still extant, published in 1697.<sup>45</sup>

#### IV.

##### DEFENSE OF THE JEWS IN SURINAM AGAINST THE FRENCH IN 1689 AND 1712.

The loyalty of the Jews to their new settlement is unparalleled in American history. Every emergency found them ready to show their allegiance to Holland. Thus, when in 1689, a French fleet, under Admiral Cassard, made a sudden attack on the colony, they were met with brave resistance by

<sup>44</sup> Cp. Dr. M. Kayserling's sketch on "The Jews of Surinam," in *Monatsschrift, l. c.*, p. 207: "Ehe noch Scharphuizen auf Surinam landete, hatte Samuel Nasi die Kolonie verlassen. Nasi konnte es nicht ertragen, einen andern Mann in der Stellung zu sehen, welche er selbst zu erlangen hoffte und welche er, vermoege seiner dem Lande erwiesenen Dienste und Fähigkeiten mit Recht beanspruchen konnte. Er verliess Surinam und schiffte sich nach Amsterdam ein. In Folge der Mitbewerbung des Juden um die Gouverneurstelle hatte Scharphuizen die jüdischen Kolonisten mit weniger Freundlichkeit behandelt und sie hoeher besteuert als die uebrigen Bewohner der Kolonie, so dass jene bei dem Grafen de Belmonte und ihrem Bürger-Capitän Samuel Nasi Klage führten und die Rückberufung des Gouverneurs aufs dringenste von der Regierung verlangten. Wirklich wurde ein anderer Gouverneur in der Person des Paulus van der Veen bestellt. Scharphuizen schiffte sich nach Holland ein; unterwegs von den Franzosen zum Gefangenen gemacht, gelangte er erst nach mehreren Monaten in die Heimat. Kaum aber in Amsterdam angekommen, wurde er von Nasi vor Gericht gefordert und gezwungen sich oeffentlich zu vertheidigen."

<sup>45</sup> *Punten en articulen, und Bericht en antwoord van den Gouverneur Jan van Scherpenhuizen.* (Amsterdam, 1697.) It would be very interesting to have a copy of this important trial, in which Samuel Nassy figured so prominently.

the Jews. Van Chattillon, son of the previous governor, displayed great heroism on this occasion.<sup>46</sup> Two Dutch historians make mention of the valor of the Jews. Verburg and Fr. Holf. Mercurius relate in their *Histories of the East and West-Indies*, that "after the death of Governor Aersen (*sic*) and the arrival of the new representative Scherpenhuizen, word was received that a French fleet was nearing Surinam. All soldiers and sailors were ordered out and summoned to appear at the fort. The call was obeyed by the Jews, of whom there were many in Surinam, and despite the fact that it was a Sabbath-day, they fought valiantly for their colony. Two letters eulogizing their action in the matter were sent to the Society *Felix Libertate*, by a worthy citizen, H. L. Bromet, who lived for many years in Surinam."<sup>47</sup>

<sup>46</sup> Cf. Koenen, *l. c.*, p. 293-294: "De Joden van Surinam bewezen de Kolonie wederom groote diensten, toen zij in den jare 1689 eenen aanval te verduren had van het Fransche Eskader, onder bevel van den vlootvoogd Cassard; in welke verdediging de Heer Van Chatillon, zoon van den vorigen Bewindhebber, zich bijzonder onderscheidde." See also Isaac de Costa's *Israel und die Voelker* (1855), p. 321; Frankel in his *Monatsschrift*, vol. XII (1863), p. 362. *Revue des Études Juives*, Vol. IV (1882), p. 131.

<sup>47</sup> Dr. E. Carmoly, in a brief note entitled: "Patriotismus der Juden in Surinam," published in Dr. Leopold Loew's journal, *Ben Chananja* (Szegedin, 1861), Vol. IV, No. 20, p. 178, n. 37, writes: "Niemand wird ihnen den Ruhm streitig machen, nicht nur ihre Soldatendienste zu thun, sondern auch bei Zuegen gegen ihre in die Wälder geflohenen Sklaven ihre Religionsgesetze den Interesse ihrer Buergerpflichten nachzusetzen; sogar abergläubische Juden werden es ihnen nicht als Suende anzeichnen. Man sehe davon einen Beweis in Verburg's *O [st] en W [est] Ind. Geschied [enis]*, 11 D. 8, *Cydl bestek*, 35 hoofd. § 45, v. d. J. 1689, und Fr. Holf. Mercurius 40 D. wo erzählt wird, dass, da nach dem Tode des Gouverneur Aersen (*sic*) der Bevollmächtigte Scherphuizen bei seiner Ankunft in Surinam die Nachricht von der Annäherung der franzoesischen Flotte erhalten habe, sogleich alle Soldaten, nebst den Matrosen und den Bürgern auf das Kastell erboten und diesem Befehl Gehorsam geleistet worden sei, selbst von den Juden, deren viele in Surinam wohnen, ungeachtet es Sabbat war. Auch hat man darueber zwei sehr schoene Briefe an die Gesellschaft: *Felix Libertate* von dem kuendigen Bürger H. L. Bromet der 20 Jahre lang in Surinam wohnte." These letters may yet be extant in the State library at Amsterdam, where many documents on Surinam are preserved.



The colony, unmolested by strife and war, soon began to thrive and prosper. Their respite was of short duration, however, for already in 1712, Admiral Cassard, at the head of another powerful squadron advanced upon the settlement. A fierce attack made in June, 1712, was manfully repulsed. In October of the same year, Cassard's fleet again appeared on the coast, and endeavored to sail up the Commawine River. The inhabitants, and particularly the Jews, under Captain Isaac Pinto<sup>48</sup> offered a stubborn resistance, and although they fought valiantly, they could not prevent the enemy from landing, bombarding the city of Paramaribo, and devastating the country. The treaty of Utrecht sealed soon after between the French and Dutch put an end to these vagaries.<sup>49</sup>

A recent writer on American Jewish history says: "In the war against the French in 1689, members of the families Pinto da Fonsera (read *Fonseca*), Arias, Naar, De Brito and D'Avilar fought valiantly."<sup>50</sup>

<sup>48</sup> See my paper in the *P. A. J. H. S.*, No. 3, p. 121, note 1; also *Révue des Études Juives*. Vol. IV (1882), p. 131.

<sup>49</sup> See Van Kampen, *Geschiedenis der Nederlanders buiten Europa*, Dl. II, bl. 416-420; *apud* Koenen's *Geschiedenis*, etc., p. 294-495: "De Kolonie was van jaar tot jaar in bloei en welstand toegenomen, sedert de heilzame hervormingen van Aerssens hare talrijke vruchten begonnen af te werpen. Geen wonder, dat ire opkomende welvaart de Fransen, die op dat pas met de Republiek in oorlog waren, geweldig in de oogen stak. In Junij des Jaars 1712 waagden zij een vrij hevigen aanval, die echter manmoedig werd afgeslagen. In October verscheen de Fransche vlootvoogd Cassard op nieuw voor de kust, en trachte de rivier Commawine binnen te zeilen. De ingezetenen, in zonderheid de joden onder hun Kapitein Isaac Pinto, boden een hardnekkigen wederstand, doch konden niet beletten, dat de vijand het land afliep, de stad Paramaribo bombardeerde, en de volkplanting op een gruwzame wijs brandschattede. Kort daarop werd de vrede van Utrecht gesloten, waardoor de Kolonie van dezen vijand gelukkig voor het vervolg verlost werd." See also Dr. Kayserling, in the *Monatsschrift*, *l. c.*, p. 208. His remarks being substantially the same, we forbear citing in full.

<sup>50</sup> Cp. Dr. A. Hahn's article on *Primitive Jewish Settlements in America*, in the *American Jews' Annual* for 1886-1887, p. 36; also Isaac de Costa, *op. cit.*, p. 321; *Révue des Études Juives*, Vol. IV (1882), p. 131. We are inclined to think that the families mentioned, distinguished themselves in subsequent engagements in Surinam, during the negro revolts of which we shall speak in the next rubric.

## V.

SUPPRESSION OF NEGRO-REVOLTS BY THE JEWS OF SURINAM  
(1690-1772.)

Hardly were the colonists freed from the depredations of the French before danger menaced them from another direction. An anonymous writer, cited by Hannah Adams,<sup>51</sup> says: "The great check to the prosperity of Surinam has arisen from the inhabitants being exposed to the invasion and lawlessness of the Maroons, or runaway negroes, who have formed several communities in the inaccessible parts of the woods, and were the most implacable and cruel enemies of the colonists. *The Jewish militia have often signalized themselves against them, and have been of great use to the colony; one-third of whom were of this (Jewish) nation.*"

Already in the year 1690 the negro slaves on the plantation of a wealthy Jewish landowner, *Machado*, rebelled against their master and murdered him. Governor Scharphuizen, who entertained bitter feelings against the Jews, refused to lend them the slightest assistance, so that they were thrown entirely upon their own resources.<sup>52</sup> More than once the Jews, exasperated

<sup>51</sup> Cp. a review of the *Essai Historique sur la Colonie Surinam*, etc., quoted often in this essay, in the *Monthly Review* for 1792; Frankel in his *Monatsschrift*, vol. XII (1863), p. 362; and Hannah Adams' *History of the Jews* (Boston, 1810) p. 457. On pp. 455-458, a fair résumé of the History of the Jews in Surinam is given.

<sup>52</sup> Koenen, *l. c.*, p. 295: "Reeds in het jaar 1690 waren de slaven op de plantagie van eenen rijken Israeliet, Machado genaamd, opgestaan, en hadden hun meester vermoord. Van toen af waren de Negers, die kans zagen om zich van hunne heeren te ontslaan, begonnen naar de binnenlanden te vluchten, alwaar zij zich in de bosschen nestelden. De Gouverneur Van Scherpenhuizen vond niet goed, den Joden bij dergelijke gelegenheden eenigen bijstand te verleenen, maar beval hun, om up hunne eigene verdediging bedacht te zijn. Dit was een groote misslag; want, eensdeels leerde hij daardoor de Israelitische bevolking zich onderling tot hare eigene handhaving te verbinden, hetgeen lichtelijk voor de Christenen bij eenige botsing gevaarlijk had kunnen worden; anderdeels liet hij daardoor langzamerhand eene macht opkomen, die gelijk de ervaring geleerd heeft, niet slechts voor de rust en veiligheid, maar voor het bestaan der volkplanting zelve hoogstgevaarlijk moest worden." Cp. also Kayserling, *l. c.*, p. 208.

by the governor's neglect, took matters into their own hands, and defended themselves with great success. The negroes, nothing daunted by this spirited show of resistance assumed a still more threatening attitude, their numbers, and hence their audacity, increasing more and more each day. The natives knowing full well that their advantage lay in their endurance of climate and similar local circumstances, understood how to utilize the fact to their benefit, and during the following years harassed the colony very much. This state of affairs, however, could not last long. In 1730 a desperate effort was made by the Jewish militia, which was determined to punish the slaves, under the lead of an under-officer followed by fourteen volunteers and thirty-six negroes. They exhibited no little courage and bravery in the taking possession and guard of an important post situated in the vicinity of the devastated negro villages.<sup>53</sup> This determined stand of the Jews did not, by any means, intimidate the lawless hordes who were intent upon rebellion and plunder. On the contrary it only roused their anger all the more. In 1731 it was again deemed imperative to check their depredations. The Citizens' Captain *Boeyé* and the spirited David Nassy, (who more than any one else before and after him worked for the prosperity of Surinam) were chosen leaders of this campaign. David Nassy is described by historians as a man of power and integrity. He is said to have drilled the negro slaves on his plantation so thoroughly for such enterprises, that his co-operation was of the utmost necessity. He was the nephew of David Nassy who first settled in Surinam and received (in 1659), the famous charter of privileges to settle in Cayenne.<sup>54</sup> (See above.) It seems that he entertained friendly relations with his negro slaves who, in 1717 were offered perfect freedom by the Political Council

<sup>53</sup> Koenen, *l. c.*, pp. 295-296: "De Joden verdedigden zich meer dan eenmaal net goed gevolg. . . . Evenwel deed men in 1730 eene krachtvolle poging, bij welke zich eene Joodsche compagnie, onder aanvoering van een Onderofficier met veertien blanken en zes-en-dertig Negers, onderscheidde door het bezetten en bewaken van een belankrijken post, na het verwoesten van de gehuchten der Bosch-negers." Cp. also Kayserling, *l. c.*, p. 208.

<sup>54</sup> Cp. Kayserling in *Monatsschrift*, *l. c.*, p. 208.

(*Raad van Politie*) if they volunteered to fight against the Maroons, who made frequent assaults on the colonists. Already in the year 1718, Nassy enlisted in the Jewish Corps, commanded by Captain *Jacob D'Avilar*, and distinguished himself in a combat of a similar nature. So impetuous and brave was he in battle that he was speedily promoted from a regular to the office of Lieutenant, and later to that of Captain of the Jewish Citizens' Company (*Kapitein der Joodsche burger compagnie*). He was, therefore, well qualified by dint of personal bravery and diplomatic skill to take so important a part in the expedition against the Maroons.

In the present campaign he was not less fortunate and heroic. Undaunted by the treacherous trick of Boeyé, who abandoned him in the middle of the fray, he attacked the foe in their own retreats, killed several and took as many more prisoners. Boeyé, who was his envious rival, fearful perhaps of the consequences of his own cowardice, accused Nassy of indiscretion and disobedience, but so universal was the esteem and sympathy felt for the latter, who had before earned laurels on the field and was thought incapable of such folly, that he had but little difficulty in proving his innocence. The result was that Nassy was honorably acquitted, whilst his jealous rival, the real culprit, was duly punished. He added to his fame most decisively by this new stroke of bravery and military prowess and had the honor of being praised and glorified by the Spanish-Jewish poetess *Benvenida Belmonte*,<sup>55</sup> who composed a fitting eulogy in verse on his deeds of valor.<sup>56</sup> Nassy was the

<sup>55</sup> Koenen, *l. c.*, p. 297, has erroneously *Ben Venida del Monte*—a name unknown in Spanish-Jewish literature. Dr. Kayserling, *l. c.*, p. 208, note 6, corrects the mistake, and identifies him with the same authoress, who wrote in praise of the Spanish translation of the Psalter by *Daniel Israel Lopez Laguna*, of Jamaica. Cp. the present writer's papers on *Early Jewish Literature in America*, in *P. A. J. H. S.*, No. 3, p. 110-112; 140-141; and *Jewish Martyrs of the Inquisition in South America*, in *P. A. J. H. S.*, No. 4, (1895) where full references are given on this famous American-Shephardic poet.

<sup>56</sup> See Koenen's *Geschiedenis l. c.*, p. 296-297: " . . . . . Reeds in 1718 had hij, (David Nassy) onder bevel van den Joodschen Kapitein Jacob d'Avilar, aan een welgelukten aanslag van dien aard deel genomen: ten gevolge van welken hij van Onderofficier tot eersten Luitenant, straks tot Kapitein der Joodsche burger-compag-

second South American Jew, whose nobility of character and state services were commemorated in Spanish-Jewish literature. (Cp. *supra*, rubric II, on Abraham Coen of Brazil.) His generalship and scientific tactics were called into requisition about two decades after his above detailed victory, in another expedition against the marauding band of negroes, who troubled the peace of the colony for nearly a century at various intervals. As previously noted, in the case of Machado, anno 1690, the slaves of another wealthy Jewish planter, *Manuel Pereira*, rebelled against their master, in 1738, and, thinking to shake off the yoke of slavery, cruelly murdered him. Hereupon, *Isaac Arias*, a former officer of the Jewish militia, who lived in the victim's neighborhood, sent out a detachment of Jewish volunteers, headed by *David Nassy* and *Abraham De Brito*, to wreak vengeance upon the rebels. The troops remained away for six weeks in the enemy's camp,<sup>57</sup> and it began to be feared that they were utterly routed and destroyed, when the company returned, bringing with them the trophies of a most successful onslaught made against the Maroons, namely six hands severed from fallen negroes, and forty-seven prisoners of war.

As a reward for their bravery every officer received from the Council (*Raad*) 75 f. (florins?); every citizen (Jewish regular) 36 f.; each armed negro 20 f.; and each colored man who was in needy circumstances, 5 f.<sup>58</sup>

nie, benoemd was. Thans was hij niet minder voorspoedig; en ofschoon door Boeyé verlaten, trof hij den vijand in zijne woningen aan; versloeg er velen, en nam een aantal anderen gevangen. Boeyé, die den Israelitischen Hoofdman wegens gebrek aan ondergeschiktheid, had aangeklaagd, werd zelf gestraft, en Nassy oogstte van dezen tocht zoo groot eenen naam in, dat hij door den Spaansch-Joodschen dichter (*sic*) Ben Venida del Monte (*sic*) in fierlijke lofdichten werd bezongen en gevierd." See also Kayserling, *l. c.*, p. 208. His notes based on Koenen's are not as full.

<sup>57</sup> Van Kampen, in his *Geschiedenis der Nederlanders buiten Europa*, Dl. III, bl. 116, says, curiously enough, that they were away about six *months* instead of six *weeks*.

<sup>58</sup> Cp. Koenen, *l. c.*, p. 297: "In 1738 standen de Negers der plantage van den Joodschen eigenaar Manuel Pereira op, vermoorden hunnen meester. Hierop zond Isaac Arias, voormalig Officier der Joodsche compagnie die zijne bezittingen in de nabuurschap had,

Five years later, in 1743, brave old Captain David Nassy, who had conducted thirty like expeditions against the Maroons, sallied forth for the last time to fight for his people and, according to some, to die on the battlefield the death of a hero.<sup>59</sup> This time he was arrayed against the Creoles, who by reason of their more acute intelligence and culture (having been long associated with Europeans) were yet the most dangerous of all their foes. Endowed with a noble Macabbean spirit, he fell like his ancestor Matathias, in the moment of victory. It was on the *Day of Atonement* that the venerable sage and warrior sallied forth to war. It must have been urgent indeed, for David Nassy regardless of the solemnity of the festival put himself at the head of his trusty men, crossed over the Surinam River; penetrated further inland; pursued the enemy, set their huts ablaze; tore their fruits out of the ground; killed many on the spot and dragged about forty slaves along with them as captives. Nassy, who had already passed his three score years and ten, fell a victim to the treachery of his foes. It was told him that the negroes had poisoned all the wells in the village, so that he was compelled to turn homeward, in order to quench the burning thirst which afflicted him and his troops, without awaiting the orders of the Council. This most

eenige, vrijwilligers van zijne natie, onder aanvoering van David Nassy en Abraham De Brito, tegen de Boschnegers uit. Zes weken lang bleef deze bende op vijandelijken grond, zoodat niemand wist wat van haar geworden was; doch bij hunne terugkomst bleek het, dat zij een allervoorspoedigsten aanval hadden gedaan terwijl zij de afgehouwene, handen van zes gesneuvelde Negers, en zeven-een-veertig krijgsgevangenen medevoerden. Jeder Officier ontving daarop van den Raad voor dezen tocht f. 75; jeder burger f. 36; elk gewapende Neger f. 20, en jeder zwarte die met levensmiddelen belast geweest was, f. 5 ter belooning." See also Dr. Kayserling, *l. c.*, pp. 208-209. He does not state what the rewards were.

<sup>59</sup> Cf. Dr. Hahn's article on *Primitive Jewish Settlements in America*, in *The American Jews' Annual* for 1886-87, p. 36, who says that "among those who fell on the battlefield was David Nassi, in 1743, at the age of seventy. That was his thirty-first campaign against the French." We are inclined to believe that this is wrong, for earlier historians (see the following note) state that he died of a broken heart—a victim of slander. Furthermore, he did not fight against the French, but the Maroons. See also Isaac de Costa, *op. cit.*, p. 321.

natural step gave his opponents a good excuse for lodging a complaint against him with the authorities, who are usually ready to listen to malice and dispute. His defense was scarcely heard and he was pronounced guilty. Such wanton ingratitude the good old soldier hardly expected as a reward for his services for the welfare of his fellow-men. Bitter disappointment and grief undermined his health. He was seized with fever, and soon after at the age of seventy, or thereabouts, death released him from his sufferings. With him died the flower of the Jewish colony, an Israelite indeed, in whom there was no guile. His co-religionist, *Isaac Carvalho*, was chosen Captain of the Jewish Citizens' Company, in his place.<sup>60</sup>

A few years later, a treaty of peace was made with the Western Maroons, who were getting more and more perilous to the safety of the colonists. But a new danger threatened them from another side. In 1749 the Maroons in the east, known as *Tempati* (?) *Negroes* (*Tempati-negers*), broke forth in mutiny, plundered a plantation completely and carried off all the negro slaves who lived there. This plantation (as in fact

<sup>60</sup> Cf. Kuenen, *l. c.*, p. 297-98: Vijf jaren later deed dezelfde on-  
vermoeide Israelit (David Nassy), die wel dertig tochten tegen de  
Boschnegers heeft ondernomen, ofschoon reeds bejaard, nog eenen  
aanval op het dorp der kreoolsche Negers, die door hunne meer dere  
beschaving en hun omgang met de Europeers de gevaarlijkste van  
alle waren. Deze strooptocht had plaats op den grooten Verzoendag  
der Joden. Zonder dat zij zich door de heiligheid van het feest lieten  
terug houden, trokken deze, de rivier Suriname langs, het binnenland  
in vervolgd den vijand, staken zijne hutten in vlam, roeiden de  
veldvruchten uit den grond, brachten een aantal Negers om, en  
voerden viertien krijgssgevangenen met zich. Doch Nassy werd het  
slachtoffer van een list des vijands. Men maakte hem diets, dat de  
waterbronnen door de Negers vergiftigd waren; een hij, door gebrek  
aan de noodige verversching gedwongen, neemt op zich om terug de  
keeren, zonder den last of de orders van den Raad af te wachten.  
Zijne benijders en tegenstanders wisten hem deswege bij den Raad in  
een kwaad gerucht te brengen; zijne verdediging werd naauwelijks  
aangehoord; zijn proces opgemaakt. Dit krenkte den wakkeren man  
zoo geweldig, dat hij door eene koorts werd aangetast, die hem in  
den ouderdom van zeventig jaren ten grave sleepte. Na zijnen dood  
werd zijn geloofsgenoot, Isaac Carvalho, in zijne plaats tot Kapitein  
der Joodsche burger—compagnie benoemd." Cp. also, Kayserling,  
*l. c.*, p. 209.

all others in Surinam) belonged to a Jewish land-owner, and was called *Auka*. Henceforth the insurrection which originated there was named after the *Auka-negroes*. Against these marauders, an expedition, partly under the Christian chief, Rijsdorp, and partly in command of the Jewish captain, *Moses Naar*, was organized and dispatched in 1757. It deserves to be mentioned, by the way, that this was Naar's *seventeenth campaign* against the Creoles. The result of this undertaking was likewise favorable. Naar burned down a whole negro-village, made a number of captives, among them being a certain Corydon, the leader of the insurrection. For his bravery and skilful capture he was presented with a worthy gift by the Council.<sup>61</sup>

We are informed by David J. C. Nasi (or Nassy), the third descendant of the original settler of Surinam, who compiled with other intelligent men of his age, an exhaustive and comprehensive chronicle of the Jews in Surinam in French,<sup>62</sup> that

<sup>61</sup> See Koenen, *l. c.*, p. 298-299: "Eenige jaren daarna werd een verdrag van vrede met de meer en meer gevaarlijk wordende westelijke Marrons gesloten. Doch nu vertoonde zich en nieuw gevaar van den kant der oostelijke of Tempati-negers, die in het jaar 1749 eene plantagie plonderden, en de Negerslaven die zich aldaar bevonden, met zich voerden. Deze plantagie behoorde eenen Joodschen eigenaar, en heette *Auka*; van daar bleef aan deze opstandelingen de naam van *Auka-negers*. Tegen dien vijand was het, dat in 1757 een tocht werd ondernomen, gedeeltelijk onder den Christenoverste Rijsdorp, gedeeltelijk onder den Joodschen Kapitein *Naar*, die reeds vroeger zestien malen tegen denzelfden vijand opgetrokken was. De uitslag ook van deze onderneming was allergunstigst. *Naar* verbrandde een groot Negerdorp, maakte een aantal gevangenen, waaronder zich zekere Corydon, de belhamel der opstandelingen, bevond, en werd voor zijn manmoedig bedrijf door den Raad met een aanzienlijk geschenk begiftigd." See also Dr. Kayserling, *l. c.*, p. 209: "Im Verein mit dem obersten Rijsdorp bekriegte Naar die noch immer Verheerung anrichtenden Neger. Er verbrannte eine ihrer groessten Doerfer, nahm ihren Häuptling gefangen und wurde wegen seiner an den Tag gelegten Tapferkeit ansehnlich belohnt."

<sup>62</sup> See the *Essai Historique sur la Colonie de Surinam, etc.*, (Paramaribo, 1788; Dutch version, Amsterdam, 1791), Vol. I, p. 123. Of this rare and valuable work, which was called forth by the writings of Dohm on the *Emancipation of the Jews*, only one copy (in the British Museum) is known to be in existence. The writer of these lines is having the volumes copied in view of his *History of the Jews in*



already in 1750, *Moses Naar* and *Gabriel de La Fatte*, in recognition of their active zeal in suppressing a revolt of the negroes in their colony, were presented with silver cups and a vote of thanks from the government.<sup>63</sup>

The fame achieved by his co-religionist, *Naar*, so enthused and electrified the young and ambitious *Isaac Nassy* that he was eagerly anticipating another outbreak on the part of the Maroons, in order to show his courage and reckless heroism. The impetuous youth met with a noble, but pathetic end:

Thinking that against a well-regulated army, however small, no valor or charge of the negroes could possibly prevail, he hastily collected twelve of his followers upon the rumor of their approach; armed his and their most trusty slaves; provided himself with the barest necessities of war, sufficient for about ten or twelve days, and pursued the retreating foe with an ardor which, if imprudent, is at least a virtue in one so young and war-thirsty. He was, however, suddenly confronted by a much more considerable number of negroes than he reckoned upon. His little band stood ground but for a short while. Nassy himself displayed great bravery, and although severely wounded by a rifle shot in his right limb, he began to fight with a still more marvelous energy in order to rally his terrified men and to re-arouse their fleeting courage. But in vain. He was captured alive by the sanguinary horde and brutally murdered. Two of their chief officers and twenty soldiers fell with him on the battlefield.<sup>64</sup>

*Surinam.* See for further references his paper in the *P. A. J. H. S.*, No. 3, pp. 126-30. It is worthy of mention that this is the *first* work published in Paramaribo.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Rev. E. M. Myers' *Centurial* (New York, 1890), p. 117, *ad ann.* 1750.

<sup>64</sup> Cp. *Essai Historique sur la Colonie de Surinam*, etc. (Paramaribo, 1788), Vol. I, pp. 98, 99; Kuenen, *l. c.*, pp. 299, 300 gives a graphic account: "Zoodanige belooning, de eerzucht ook van den nog jeugdigen *Isaac Nassy* prikkelende, berokkende dezen moedigen jongeling zijn ondergang. Naijverig op de onderscheiding, door zijnen geloofsgenoot verworven, en wanende, dat de Boschnegers tegen een' geregelden aanval geen moed noch kracht wisten over te stellen, verzamelt hij in haast een twaalfstal zijner vrienden, wapent hunne beste slaven en de zijnen, voorziet zich met een onbeduidenden voorraad van krijgsbehoeften en levensmiddelen voor tien of twaalf

At last, the authorities saw that it was advisable and imperative again to make a treaty of peace with the relentless Maroons, or fugitive negroes, (*gevluchte Negers*) whose ravages for over half a century spread ruin and terror throughout the land. Accordingly, on the 23d of May, 1761, peace was established, to last for a good many years, apparently.<sup>65</sup> It was not long, however, before hostilities were resumed. In 1772 the State Council found it imperative to call in the aid of the mother country against the Maroons, who grew more audacious in proportion as they advanced in culture and education.<sup>66</sup> The State General, roused to action by the serious state of affairs in the colony, sent a company of 500 men, under command of Captain Forgeoud, who had previously shown much courage and ingenuity in suppressing a revolt of negroes in the Barbary States. Two years later, a series of military posts was established, beginning from the *Savannah of the Jews* to the banks of the Commawine River and from there to the sea. Forts, strengthened by means of palisades were constructed from plantation to plantation, and when finally peace was enforced, the colony was spared from any further molestation at the hands of the unruly negroes.<sup>67</sup> Koenen, though very

dagen en vervolgt alzoo den op de vlucht gedreven' vijand. Doch hij stutte op een veel grooter aantal dan hij berekend had. Eenen tijd lang hielden de blanken zich nog stande. *Nassy* leide groote dapperheid aan een dag, en ofschoon hij een geweerschot in het rechterbeen bekomen had, deed hij nog groote moeite om zijne lieden te hereenigen en hun zinkenden moed weder aan te wakkeren. Doch te vergeefs. Hij werd levend door de Negers gevat, en wreedaardig vermoord. Wellicht zouden zij hem nog het leven gespaard hebben, ten einde de voldoening te smaken van zich door een' blanke te laten dienen; maar de wraakzucht, die al te hevig in hun woesten boezem blaakte, liet hun zelfs deze wreede barmhartigheid niet toe. Zij verloren echter bij deze gelegenheid een tweetal hunner opperhoofden, en nog wel twintig gemeenen." See also Kayserling, in *Monatschrift*, l. c., pp. 209, 210.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Koenen, l. c., p. 300-301: "Den 23 sten Mei, 1761, werd er een vrede met hen gesloten, die thans een einde maakte aan de gewapende tochten," etc., etc.

<sup>66</sup> See *Essai Historique sur la Colonie de Surinam*, etc., Vol. I, p. 130.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. *Essai Historique*, etc., Vol. I, p. 135; Koenen, l. c., p. 301-302.

fair and just to the Jews in his *History*, sees fit to reproach them for their unkind treatment of slaves,<sup>68</sup> which, he opines, was the chief cause of the rebellion, lasting over seventy years. We are inclined to think that this rebuke is unwarranted, inasmuch as the rigid Mosaic and Rabbinic laws regarding them, were always strictly followed by the Jews and those in Surinam, who had men like the family of Nassy at their head, could not have trespassed these ordinances. He admitted, however, in his summary, that the colony in her defense was always deeply indebted to the Jewish militia, and in social and commercial matters especially beholden to them; for the Jews were the cultivators of the marshy and often dangerous soil and the masters of commerce, the chief factors of the welfare and prosperity of the settlement,<sup>69</sup> since its foundation. Not desiring to anticipate our conclusions in a larger work, we content ourselves with saying that nowhere else in the history of America is such devotion, disinterestedness and loyalty on the part of Jewish citizens so marked, and let us add, so gratefully recognized as in the little Dutch Province of Surinam. And nowhere else in the New World did the Israelites thrive more in culture, learning and religion than in the *Jewish Savannah* of Guiana, as their community was called. Small wonder, then, in view of their attachment to their Hollandish masters, when we hear that in 1785, on the occasion of the reconsecration of their synagogue, then 100 years old, the Governor Wichers, with all the provincial magistrates and other eminent citizens, attended in a body the impressive ceremonies, which

<sup>68</sup> See Koenen, *l. c.*, p. 300: " . . . De afkeer des verdrukten Negers was veel grooter voor den Israelitischen meester dan voor den Christenplanter; en de Jood was harder tegen den armen slaaf, dan zijn landgenoot van verschillend geloof," etc.

<sup>69</sup> Cf. Koenen, *ibid.*, *l. c.*, p. 300-301: " . . . Haasten wij ons intusschen, tegenover deze treurige bedenkingen de aangenamer opmerking te maken, dat de volkplanting wegens hare verdediging niet minder verplichtingen aan hare Joodsche bevolking in die dagen gehad heeft, dan vroeger wegens de oorbaarmaking harer woeste gronden, of als het moederland door de herlevendiging van deszelfs handel; en dat dus de Jood in de kolonien door het beoefenen van den landbouw en het waarnemen der landsbeveiliging, die verdiensten verworven heeft, die hem in het Gemeenebest zelve nog schenen te ontbreken."

are graphically narrated in a little volume published by an eye witness.<sup>70</sup> And that two Christian philo-Semites wrote beautiful verses in Dutch in honor of these festivities, republished by the writer, elsewhere.<sup>71</sup> Nor does it now seem strange that the Jews loved to glorify their governors, J. G. Wichers,<sup>72</sup> Sir Chas. Green,<sup>73</sup> and Abraham De Veer,<sup>74</sup> in pretty songs and hymns, written in Hollandish and Hebrew. These were but poetic tokens of their patriotism. As late as 1853, the records inform us of their prosperity and constantly growing activity and interest in the colony. In that year we find them in the courts (Ellis, Juda, Fernandes, and others); among thirteen advocates, notaries, and procurators, there were seven Jews (Heilbronn, Colaço, Belmonte, de Granada, Abendañon, etc.); many served in the army as captains, lieutenants, colonels, majors, and chaplains.

<sup>70</sup> *Beschrijving van de plechtigheden, nevens de lofdichten en gebeden uitgesproken op het eerste Jubelfeest van de Synagoge der Portugeesche Joodsche gemeente, op de Savane in de Colonie Suriname, genaamd Zegen En Vrede. [Berakha Ve-Shalom] op den 12 den van Wijnmaand 1785.* (Amsterdam, Hendrik Willem en Cornelis Dronsberg, 1786). The volume is described at length in my paper on *Early Jewish Literature in America*, *P. A. J. H. S.*, No. 3, pp. 126-129, where the Hebrew title is also given.

<sup>71</sup> See the writer's *Literary Gleanings on American Jewish History*, No. II, in the *Menorah Monthly* for September, 1895 (Vol. XIX), pp. 149-152.

<sup>72</sup> See S. J. Rudelsom's *Lofzang op den bleyde dag der inhuldiging van. . . . J. G. Wichers, gouverneur-generaal over de colonie v. Suriname, 2 Juni, 1785.* The Ms. of this interesting pamphlet will soon be printed, with other works of Surinam Jews, in the French Jewish periodical, *Révue des Etudes Juives*, published in Paris. See also *P. A. J. H. S.*, No. 3, p. 127.

<sup>73</sup> *Plechtigheden, vreugde gezangen en gebeden in de Hoogd. Joodsche Synagoge Neve Salom, te Suriname, op d. dag d. dinkuldig. van Sir Charles Green, Gouverneur-Generaal over Suriname, opgesteld en gezongen d. J. M. De Vries, Voorzanger.* (Paramaribo, 1804.) See also *P. A. J. H. S.*, No. 3, p. 130.

<sup>74</sup> See *Plechtige Vreugde Gezangen, en Gebeden, Verricht in de Hoogduitsche Israelitische Synagoge Neve Salom. . . . te Suriname, ter gelegenheid, en op den blydendag der Inhuldiging van Zynen Hoog Edelen Gestrengen, Heer Abraham De Veer, Gouverneur-Generaal der gemelde kolonie,—Gezongen door den Erwaarden Heer Tobias Tall.* The Hebrew title and other particulars are given in the writer's paper, *P. A. J. H. S.*, No. 3, pp. 130-131.

In fact they minister to the public weal in every conceivable capacity.<sup>75</sup> In their hands the colony still prospers. Recent reports, made by a correspondent of the *Jewish Chronicle* in London, are aglow with enthusiasm for the prosperity of their now thrifty and intelligent colony, and reassure us of the vigor and tenacity of our faith in that distant land.

## VI.

### EXTRACTS FROM A LETTER OF DAVID EBRON (DATED 1597) TO KING PHILIP II, GIVING AN ACCOUNT OF HIS DISCOVERIES AND SERVICES TO THE STATE, IN SOUTH AMERICA.

Among the numerous letters, documents and registers of the Albaic archives,<sup>76</sup> which bear special reference to the discovery and colonization of America, is particularly noticeable the culture-historic, perhaps valuable memorial address of DAVID EBRON from Constantine, Algeria (dated December 9th, 1597), to the Emperor, Philip II. The writer introduces himself in the preliminary note as an Israelite, who, at a tender age, fled to Africa, and rendered important services to the King of India and other personages of rank in various sections of Africa.

He enumerates many items of surprising significance, apparently anxious to array them as an overwhelming evidence of his abilities and reliability, and eager to impress upon the august reader the great amount of gratitude due him for his achievements. He prepared accurate sketches of distant

<sup>75</sup> Cf. Dr. Kayserling, *Monatsschrift*, l. c., p. 213.

<sup>76</sup> For completeness' sake we reproduce this chapter from a recent sketch in the *Menorah Monthly* (Vol. XIX), for September, 1895, pp. 145-148, entitled: *A 16th Century document written by David Ebron, a Jewish financier in America*. This newly discovered letter is perhaps the most important evidence yet furnished of the services rendered by the Jews in the discovery and financial improvement of America, and deserves to be incorporated in this work. The book containing a copy of this document was lately published in Madrid (1891), under the title: *Documentos Escogidos del Archivo de la Casa di Alba*. See for other particulars the above quoted article in *Menorah*, note. We intend publishing Ebron's letter soon in the original.

regions and established settlements, dependent upon his generous bounty; he discovered countries and conquered them, and whatsoever had been attempted in Santa Marta, South America, within the last five years, may be safely attributed to his energetic activity and perseverance. Thence he repaired by land to Peru, and enlisted in the service of the monarch in Huancabelica. The last remarkable harvest in quicksilver, which was so advantageous to the king, was chiefly due to his judicious management. By careful husbanding of material and laudable zeal he was instrumental in not only saving sixty and some odd thousand pesos (!) involved in the annual transportation of small fleets from Lima and Panama but equally as much by causing galleys to be constructed there.

Through the personal malice and mean manœuvres of two officials, the well-merited reward for the last mentioned benefits was withheld from him. "But," affirms the abused victim of ingratitude with a dignified emphasis, which seemed to restore his confidence, "my accomplishments in this regard may easily be ascertained by application to Gutierrez Florez, the Indian minister of commerce in Seville."

"I do not bring these facts to your notice," continues the self-vindicator in haughty terms, "in order to obtain reward from your Majesty, but that your serene highness might perceive how zealously and indefatigably, I, a *secret Hebrew*,<sup>77</sup> travelled everywhere, despite harassing circumstances, obstacles end even imminent perils, and have forsaken your realm out of pure fear to die outside of my faith, which, according to my conception is the only true creed appointed by the Almighty, the Creator of heaven, sun, moon, sea and all things therein, you, gracious Sire included. I do not revive these recollections in order to deplore my ill-fortune or petition for the proper remuneration and recognition denied me for the various favors rendered, for such great and weighty benefits I am yet in a position to offer from here, without necessitating my residence there; only out of simple attachment to your royal highness,

<sup>77</sup> On the Marranos in Hispañiola and South America, Dr. Kayserling has published some interesting data in the *P. A. J. H. S.*, No. 2; see also his *Christopher Columbus and the Participation of the Jews in the Discovery of America* (New York, 1894).

whom I desire to serve and in order that the memory of this Israelite and his faithful acts be not wholly eradicated from your heart, I am quite satisfied to continue the diligent execution of projects confided to my trust. O, would it please the Heavenly Father, that the Jews in your dominion could enjoy the same liberties and privileges accorded to them by the exemplary toleration of the Pope in Rome, Venice Milan, Naples, in the whole of Apulia, Ragusa, Florence, Pisa, Ferrara, Mantova and Italy and *here in Constantine* and the Barbary States.

Would that they were permitted to migrate from one portion of your realm to the other and live under the same circumstances as elsewhere. Then I would not resign from the office I so loyally occupied, and your countries would considerably increase in commercial opulence—it is inconceivable why your Grace should not participate in the profits reaped by others—then your armies, military exploits and campaigns against Lutherans, heretics and other enemies would be much more successful than they have been heretofore.

“And as regards the Spanish Inquisition against the Jews,”<sup>78</sup> further declares this remarkable champion of the Mosaic faith, “I have absolutely no objection to urge, if it is directed against such as voluntarily embrace Christianity and secretly profess the ancient religion.” He calls the King’s attention to the fact that within two months he could at command transport 200,000 pesos cash money into the state treasury without injuring anyone; in a similar manner he is able in one single day, whenever the King willed it, to obtain more than one million pieces of gold from Santa Fe in the new kingdom of Granada. Other treasures are spoken of as accessible to the all-conquering genius of *David Ebron*, and obtainable by him for the King, whom he is intent on reconciling to his Jewish subjects.

<sup>78</sup> The writer of these pages, in another paper, treats of the sufferings of the *Marranos* or New Christians in Mexico, Peru and Brazil from 1570 to 1750. See his article on “The Jewish Martyrs of the Inquisition in South America,” in *P. A. J. H. S.*, No. 4, (1895). Dr. Cyrus Adler furnishes in the same *Publications*, No. 4, a valuable sketch on the “Trial of Jorge de Almeida by the Inquisition in Mexico,” 1590–1609, which sets forth the social condition of the secret Jews in that country at the end of the sixteenth century.

His eloquence reaches the fever heat of indignation, however, when he alludes to the thievish officials in the King's employ. "What a pity, your Majesty, that so much money is stolen in India and Spain. I could aggravate myself to death when I contemplate upon the mass of wealth wrongfully acquired by your representatives and ministers. Were I to enumerate all the outrageous robberies committed against you, O mighty Sovereign, in Seville, and apprise you of the doings of that infamous horde there stationed, and admitted into your court! . . . O lips, if only you would divulge the secrets which oppress the heart! O tongue! why not reveal what you know and feel?" In concluding his remarks, he places himself at the disposal of the government as confidential agent in the affairs of Portugal, the marriage of the Oranian, and similar matters, and enjoins upon the King to communicate with him under the seal of strictest privacy, should he require his co-operation or assistance at any future time. "The God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob," says he, "who created the universe, protect and exalt your Majesty and inspire you to deal leniently and indulgently with your Hebrews, whom God never totally ignores or forgets, but inflicts with penalties and disasters only to try their fortitude and allegiance!"

This quite forgotten explorer and financier, whose eloquent plea in behalf of his race can not fail to appeal to every one, and whose only demand for the enormous service rendered to his king is more tolerance toward his people, deserves an honorable place in the annals of American Jewish History as a loyal, patriotic subject.

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## VII.

### ENTERPRISE AND INFLUENCE OF THE GRADIS FAMILY IN THE WEST INDIES, AND DURING THE CANADIAN WARS.

This is not to be a series of biographical sketches on the Rothschilds of the Eighteenth Century, for neither the space nor the scope of this work would permit of such an elaborate history. This chapter aims merely to set forth the political



prominence attained by the family of Gradis,<sup>79</sup> to whose hands the fortunes of two continents were entrusted, and whose labors of love and patriotic services during the war-times of France in America, deserve to be chronicled in our annals. Reserving the elaboration of the family's antecedents, and other interesting particulars for another large paper on the *History of the Jews in Martinique*—the seat of their chief activity—we shall here detail those facts which concern our topic the most.

We may begin with *David Gradis*, who, in 1731, was naturalized in Bordeaux,<sup>80</sup> and who died in 1751. Already in 1696 he founded the great mercantile house which had commercial connections with England, Holland, Paris, southern France and the West Indies. The exports were linen, wine and alcohol. In the year 1715, David Gradis tided over the financial crisis under Louis XIV., after paying a draft of 150,000 francs, which his house endorsed. In fact the hard times did not affect him much, for we know that only two years after he conducted all the transatlantic commerce. He fitted out three ships, one bound for Cayenne and two for the Island of Martinique (or *Martinico*). His cargo consisted of wine, alcohol, meal and pickled meat, which he exchanged for sugar and indigo in the West Indian ports. Another money-crisis in 1719, passed without materially injuring his prospects, although he lost heavily. In spite of it, however, he again undertook foreign expeditions and was, as before, successful. In 1724, his business expanded to such an extent that he opened a branch on the island of St. Domingo. His name and fame grew in pop-

<sup>79</sup> The sources whence the materials contained in this chapter are taken, being for the most part accessible, and, as in a forthcoming essay on the *Jews of Martinique*, all the references will be incorporated in full, the writer merely quotes the following authorities: *Notice sur la famille Gradis et sur la maison Gradis et fils de Bordeaux, par Henri Gradis* (1875), *apud* Graetz, "Die Familie Gradis," in his *Monatsschrift*, etc., Vol. XXIV (1875), pp. 447-459; XXV (1876), pp. 78-85; his *Geschichte der Juden*, Vol. XI (Leipzig, 1870), pp. 190, 200, 202, 223; see also Ad. Thierry: *Dissertation sur cette quest. est-il des moyens de rendre les juifs plus heureux et plus utile en France*—(ouvrage couronné) Paris, 1788; and several books on the history of the Jews in Bordeaux. In our narrative of the career of the Gradis family we follow Prof. Graetz, in his *Monatsschrift*, l. c.

<sup>80</sup> Cf. also Dr. Graetz, in *Monatsschrift*, Vol. XXIV, p. 557.

ularity and opulence, and French America was glad to acknowledge the enterprise of this energetic man who passed under the name of *the Portuguese Merchant*. And, although Jews were not tolerated in the French colonies, by the stern and scheming Jesuits, as we shall have ample occasion to show elsewhere, the government was constrained to overlook his origin and belief, in view of his vast influence and commercial importance. So universal was the esteem felt for the house of David Gradis that when his son Samuel, who conducted the interests of the business in St. Pierre, Martinique, died there in 1732, his remains were interred in the garden of the *frères de la Charité*, and masses were held in the cloisters for the repose of his soul. True, the monks dared not erect a monument to mark the spot. The lieutenant of the colony urged in argument of their expulsion the fact that were any of the members of the house of Gradis, there established, to die, their property would have to be confiscated, for Jews were not permitted to have possessions. Nevertheless he shut his eyes on their prolonged residence on the island. Abraham, eldest son of David Gradis, succeeded his father as senior member of the firm, of which he was previously a partner. He achieved even more fame than his predecessor. Endowed with wonderful ability and speculative genius, he also controlled the trade of France with the West Indies. He received important official contracts from the government; became intimate with personages of the highest political rank; obtained the protection and friendship of M. Maurepas, the confidant of Louis XVI., and added much to the glory and renown of the house of "*David Gradis, et fils.*" His extensive correspondence with the greatest men of the reign of Louis XV. and XVI., is still extant.

Through the friends who were influential in his behalf at court, his ships were fitted out at the cost of the government, and this gave him further opportunity to enlarge his business connections. Nor was he ungrateful for these privileges and for the consideration shown him by his royal patron. Thus we hear of remarkable exploits undertaken in behalf of his country. In the wars between England and France for the possession of Canada, he displayed extraordinary activity. In order to expedite matters, he fitted out ships to Canada,

although the insurance on the cargo, because of the war then pending, was most exorbitant. If his freight vessels were captured by the armed cruisers of the enemy, he built and replenished new ones, without caring for losses thus incurred for France. In 1748, he organized the society of Canada, under the auspices of the government, in order to test the possibilities of the land, and thereby again widened the sphere of his mercantile activity. Important missions were entrusted to him. His ships carried valuable cargo (presumably military ammunition, etc.), always at the expense of the firm. He even erected magazines in Quebec. Later on the government defrayed these costs, but *David Gradis et fils* had no little share in the success of these projects.

After his father's death in 1751, Abraham Gradis' financial interests were still more extended. To give an idea of the scope of his commercial activity we will cast a momentary glance into the private accounts of the firm. In 1758, the commerce of the house with the French colonies alone, amounted to 2,369,326 francs. In the following year, the firm received the commission to forward 4500 tons of goods and ammunition for the French troops in Canada. Twelve ships, among them *eight of his own* were called into service for the purpose. From 1759 to 1763, when Canada ceased to be a French possession, the export trade of the firm of Gradis was worth *nine million francs*. These merchant vessels, on account of the war, had to be manned by a goodly company of soldiers, who had frequent occasion to defend themselves from attacks on the sea, and saved quite often the honor of their flag by their fearlessness and bravery.

During the struggle between England and France for the occupation of Canada, the house of Gradis dispatched thither many heavily laden ships at the order and expense of the French Government, which was their debtor to the amount of several millions on more than one occasion. Of course these obligations could not be liquidated for some time. Gradis & Co.'s drafts were not promptly paid, for France was impoverished by the American wars and had no means at her disposal. Although these noble financiers suffered heavy losses from the capture and detention of richly cargoes vessels sent out in the

name of France, they did not lose faith and preserved their balance with a skill and energy which is remarkable. Far from fearing to sacrifice too much for the fatherland, they strove more and more to merit the good will and esteem of the king and the aristocracy. It was indeed a work of charity and patriotism on their part to ransom French captives.<sup>81</sup> Abraham Gradis, we are told, authorized an influential business friend in London, to supply the captains and commanders held as prisoners in England with everything necessary to ease and comfort their condition.<sup>82</sup>

He more than once was compelled to appeal to the government for the necessary funds due him, in order to carry on his trade with the colonies, which was increasing in dimensions every year. The road to the audience-chamber of the King was not always clear to even so influential a personage as Abraham Gradis. On one occasion, being hard pressed for money to fill a large order received from the West Indies, he presented his claim to Minister Berryer—well known for his harsh and imperious demeanor. The latter, hesitating to comply, Gradis assured him that unless his demands were soon satisfied he would be prevented from accomplishing his duties. Whereupon the stern minister cuttingly replied: "*That will not be such a great misfortune; you merchants are accustomed to such things; in fact you become rich through them!*" Abraham Gradis straightened himself up at this insult, and looking steadily at the great man, said: "The name of Gradis, better known in four quarters of the globe than that of the Minister of France, is free from dishonor. No taint of any kind covers its escutcheon!" With

<sup>81</sup> This important fact is thus recorded by Prof. Graetz: (*Geschichte der Juden*, vol. XI, p. 190) "Gradis aus einer reichen und angesehenen Familie in Bordeaux, die grosse Bank- und ueberseeische Geschaefte fuer die franzoesischen Colonien betrieb, eigene Schiffe ausruestete und dem franzoesischen Staate in den entfernten Besitzungen durch Ausloesung franzoesischer Gefangener aus den Haenden der Englaender Dienste geleistet hatte." See also the following note, which is still more explicit.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Graetz, in *Monatsschrift*, vol. XXIV., p. 452: ". . . Abraham Gradis gab einem Geschaeftsfreunde in London den Auftrag, den gefangenen franzoesischen Capitaenen und Commandanten auf seine Rechnung Alles zu verabreichen, was sie noethig haben sollten, um ihre Lage zu erleichtern."

this he urged the minister with even greater persistence to render him satisfaction by appealing to the King in his behalf. Berryer, unused to such show of courage and firmness, could not but comply with his request, and Gradis' claims were duly honored.

It was no conceit that prompted his reply to the haughty representative of King Louis XV. His sovereign gave frequent sign of his favor and gratitude for the diplomatic skill and rare tact as well as noble devotion with which Gradis managed the business affairs of the empire in these revolutionary days. The minister once wrote in the following strain to Gradis & Co.: "I considered it my duty to remind his Majesty that your conduct was both unselfish and zealous for the welfare and services of the state on all occasions and under all circumstances. His Majesty commissions me to express to you his utmost satisfaction and recognition."

As a reward for his untiring interest in behalf of the French nation, exceptional privileges were granted to him (Abraham Gradis), and his family in the colonies. The right of owning real estate and civil equality in common with the other citizens of France on the Island of Martinique, were accorded to him in 1779. It is interesting to note that he was associated with the Superior of the Jesuit Missionaries in Martinique—the famous *pater Lavalette*, who had charge of the largest and most influential congregation there, and who conducted an immense business with foreign countries: Gradis once advanced him 400,000 francs. He often received him in his own home socially, and was charmed by the personal merits of the enterprising Jesuit. This did not prevent Gradis—a shrewd and careful merchant who knew just how much to risk—from severing all connections with him, for he rather early suspected the utter collapse of Lavalette's colossal undertakings, and thus avoided the bankruptcy which would inevitably have resulted, had he, like other careless firms, allowed himself to be drawn into the vortex of speculation. Similar causes of self-preservation prompted him to withdraw from further commercial relations with the State, as another financial crisis warned him of the outbreak of the Revolution.

Much more of interest might be told of Abraham Gradis and

other members of the same stock. Thus for instance of his acts of kindness during the famine in the French Colonies, at which time he sent seventeen ships laden with nourishment and merchandise for the relief of the suffering—a fact used by the Abbe Gregoire as a plea and an argument in favor of the emancipation of the Jews.

A rebellion in St. Domingo and in Martinique where the Gradis family (among them David II, Benjamin, Moses Gradis, etc.), owned extensive territory, together with the losses in the mother country during the French Revolution, caused the downfall of this princely house. Their possessions in St. Domingo, valued at three million francs, were utterly ruined. The slaves in their employ were (unknown to them) misused by their representative, hence the "habitation," as his property was called, began to yield but sad results. The younger brother, Moses, saved at least a meagre portion of the vast wealth once commanded by the house of Gradis, by visiting the island and caring for the negroes, who, in gratitude for his kind treatment of them—eulogized by the abolitionist Schoelcher—strove to make good their former losses. The family of Gradis is immortalized in the history of the commerce of two continents. "Their works are their monuments."

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## VIII.

### THE CIVIL AND MILITARY STATUS OF THE JEWS IN JAMAICA.

In the West Indies, the Jews, though debarred from public office until late, contributed much to the public good. Their constancy and restless activity in behalf of the Government under which they served are chronicled by many historians. It were useless to give an elaborate account of their influence for good in the islands. It would lead us much too far to recount them, and in fact many things have been recorded of this nature by the present writer elsewhere.<sup>83</sup> If we mention the case of *Daniel Cordoso*, who was killed while defending Cura-

<sup>83</sup> Cf. G. A. Kohut's article on *Jews in St. Thomas, Jamaica and Barbados*, in the *P. A. J. H. S.*, No. 4.

çao, from an attack of the English in 1805,<sup>84</sup> it is because his is the only one referred to by name in the history of that island. No doubt other researches will be made by the active members of the *American Jewish Historical Society*, in this direction, which will silence all calumny against our patriotism. As a fitting epilogue to these pages, we subjoin a "List of Jews appointed to civil and military offices in Jamaica, since the act of 1831," extracted from the official gazettes of the island, and presented by Sir F. H. Goldsmid, in his *Arguments advanced against the enfranchisement of the Jews, considered in a series of letters*, Second Edition, London 1833, pp. 39-40 (First Ed., London, 1831), arranged in the following chronological order:

1831.

- |               |   |
|---------------|---|
| October 15th  | MYER BENJAMIN, Gent., to be a Quartermaster.  |
| October 24th  | MOSES GOMES SILVA, ESQ., to be a Provost Marshal-General. <sup>85</sup>   |
| October 27th  | ALEXANDER BRAVO, Esq., to be a Magistrate and Assistant Judge of the Court of Common Pleas for the Parish of Clarendon. |
| November 2nd  | PHILIP LUCAS, Esq., to be a Magistrate and Assistant Judge of the Court of Common Pleas for the Parish of Kingston.     |
| December 13th | AARON GOMES DACOSTA, Gent., to be an Ensign.  |
| December 31st | DANIEL JACOBS, Gent., to be an Ensign.  |

1832.

- |              |   |
|--------------|---|
| January 19th | ALEXANDER JOSEPH LINDO, Gent., to be a Quartermaster.   |
| March 8th    | JACOB DE PASS, Esq., to be a Magistrate and Assistant Judge of the Court of Common Pleas for the Parish Port Royal. |

<sup>84</sup> See Koenen's *Geschiedenis*, etc., p. 307-8: ". . . . . Toen in 1805 de Engelschen een vruchtelozen aanval op dit eiland deden, de Joden, aldaar woonachtig, hun plicht ter verdediging van hetzelfde moedig betracht hebben, zoodat een van hen, zijnde *Daniel Cardoso*, geboortig van Amsterdam, bij die gelegenheid gesneuveld is." Cf. also Van Hamelsveld, *Geschiedenis der Joden*, p. 363.

<sup>85</sup>This is analogous to the English office of Sheriff.

1832.

March 9th	SAMUEL DELISSER, Gent., to be an Ensign.
April 27th	ISAAC GOMES DACOSTA, Gent., to be a Quartermaster.
May 1st	GEORGE ISAACS, Gent., to be a Quartermaster.
May 5th	BARNET ISAACS, Gent., to be an Ensign.
July 6th	DAVID LOPEZ, Gent., to be a Lieutenant of Artillery.
July 26th	ABRAHAM ISAACS, Esq., to be a Magistrate and Assistant Judge of the Court of Common Pleas for the Parish of St. Ann.
August 4th	MOSES Q. HENRIQUES, Gent., to be an Ensign. <sup>86</sup>

It is evident from this brief and insufficient summary of our subject, that the Jews on American soil, north and south, east and west, were loyal, law-abiding citizens, noble philanthropists and exemplary patriots.

<sup>86</sup> This list was already published by the writer in an article on *The Civil and Military Status of American Jews*, in *Menorah Monthly*, Vol. XVIII, No. 4, pp. 256-7.









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